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Descriptive Study on Demographic Factors and Performance Strategies among Athletes

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the differences between demographic factors and performance strategies among athletes. The demographic factors such as gender, years of study, and years of involvement in sports play an important role in the use of performance strategies in determining their performance strategies in sports. The instrument used for this research was the Test of Performance Strategies (TOPS) to measure the performance strategies. The finding has shown that there were significant differences between the demographic factors and the performance strategies. The demographic variables consist of age, gender, year of study, and years of involvement in sports. The performance strategies include the constructs (goal setting, relaxation, activation, imagery, self-talk, attentional control, emotional control, and automaticity). In general, the result showed that the differences between the demographic factors such as; gender at $t(21) = 13.75$; $p < .05$; years of study at $t(21) = 9.46$; $p < .05$ and years of involvement at $t(20) = 11.37$; $p < .05$ and the performance strategies were significant. In addition, there were significant differences between the demographic factors (age, gender, year of study, and years of involvement in sports) and all sub factors in the performance strategies such as goal setting, relaxation, activation, imagery, self-talk, attentional control, emotional control, and automaticity. Based on the findings, it can be inferred that to enhance the athletes' ability and competency in sports, they have to be trained in various styles/methods according to their age, gender, years of study, and years of involvement.

Keywords: Demographic Factors, Gender, Years of Study, Years of Involvement, Performance Strategies, Athletes

Introduction

Psychological strategies training plays an important role to help athletes in enhancing their sports performance (Thelwell *et al.*, 2006) and improving the psychological state variables such as pre-competition anxiety (Fletcher & Hanton, 2001), the self-efficacy during competition (Lowther *et al.*, 2002), motivation, and reducing stress level (Hanton & Jones, 1999).

With all these skills, most sports coaches perceive that their athletes can potentially experience less stress and high coping skills, contributing to a more effective recovery after competition or exercise. Even so, such use of the psychological skills is different between in practice and competition scenes. The role of mental skills among collegiate athletes during exercise and competition were significantly different (Frey *et al.*, 2003).

The psychological strategies are fundamental to develop the athletes' performances. According to the psychological skills have been known to increase a number of psychological variables including self-confidence, satisfaction, and enjoyment in athletes (Birrer & Morgan, 2010; Tod *et al.*, 2011). Other skills related to psychological are the goal-setting, attentional focus, coping skills, and mental toughness. The strength of psychological skills will assist athletes in optimising their physical skills and empower their performance (Smith *et al.*, 1995; Birrer & Morgan, 2010).

Demographic Variable (Gender)

Gender has been identified as a major factor in measuring the performance of athletes through the impact of height, weight, body fat, muscle mass, aerobic capacity, or anaerobic threshold as a result of genetics and hormonal differences (Perez-Gomez *et al.*, 2008). From this finding, gender has represented as the main factor in determining the performance and achievement of athletes.

Previous research findings have reported that women were more likely to achieve a lower record in sports performance (Perez-Gomez *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, the physical and psychological capability of women and men athletes were significantly different (Umeda *et al.*, 1999). The performance gap between male and female athletes in the Olympic games have been consistently immense since 1983 (Valerie, *et al.* 2010).

Women who have achieved high level of performances were incomparable with male athletes' performances (Cheuvront *et al.*, 2005). The performances improved according to gender differences. The performance stability appears through the following parameters: coefficients of variation, slope coefficients, coincident breakpoint dates between world records, and ten best performances. This performance stability is not affected by the external, non- physiological factors such as technology and doping advancements that could challenge it.

The rapid change on the females' performances that have been observed could also be explained by the increasing number of events proposed to women and by the investment of East European nations